

**BATTLE CREEK CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, March 28, 2012**

**1. Call to Order:**

Chairman Preston Hicks, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**2. Attendance:**

**Members Present:**

Steve Barker	John Godfrey	John Stetler
Dan Buscher	Preston Hicks	
Jan Frantz	Chip Spranger	

**Members Excused:** Susan Baldwin (Mayor) and Dave Walters

**Staff Present:** Christine Hilton, Planning Supervisor  
Jill Steele, Deputy City Attorney  
Glenn Perian, Senior Planner  
Leona Parrish, Administrative Assistant, Planning Dept.

**3. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda: None**

**4. Approval of Minutes: Meeting Minutes & Workshop Minutes of February 22, 2012.**

Commissioner Jan Frantz requested an addition of two words to the February 22, 2012 Workshop Minutes regarding her statement on page 2 to read as follows: *Commissioner Frantz stated for the good of the order, they cannot overlook their statutory responsibility, which is to present recommendations to the City Commission.*

**MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER GODFREY, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER SPRANGER, TO APPROVE THE PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 22, 2012 AS PRESENTED AND FOR THE FEBRUARY 22, 2012 WORKSHOP MINUTES WITH CORRECTION AS NOTED.**

**VOTE ON MOTION: ALL IN FAVOR; NONE OPPOSED; MOTION CARRIED.**

**5. Correspondence: Document received from North Central Neighborhood Planning Council (NPC#2) in support of Sprout Urban Farms Special Use Permit request on today's agenda.**

**6. Public Hearings and Deliberation/Recommendations:**

**A. Special Use Permit #S-02-12:** Petition from Sprout Urban Farms, Mr. Jeremy Andrews, 41 N. Wabash Avenue, Battle Creek, MI 49017. Requesting a Special Use Permit to allow a Community Garden with Hoop Houses, Community Barn and Retail of Food Grown on site as permitted under the Planning and Zoning Code, Chapter 1290.01(b)(10), for property located at 245 N. Kendall Street.

Ms. Christine Hilton, Planning Supervisor, stated the property located at 245 N. Kendall Street was an 2.15 acre parcel that is a one-block parcel boarded by Oneita St., Parkway Dr., Kendall St. and Helen M. Montgomery Ave. with the surrounding properties that are zoned "R-2 Two-Family Residential". Stated the property had been occupied by Bright Star Faith Temple until the year 2010 and had been transferred to the Calhoun County Land Bank who demolished the building, and there is one remaining garage structure located on the southeast corner. Said Calhoun County plan to lease this property to Sprout Urban Farms and had submitted a very thorough site plan showing the future amenities such as orchards, community barn and hoop houses; noted they propose a fence around the property and future lighting and that the property already have utilities available. Ms. Hilton stated that staff felt this application meets all the requirements and standards in the ordinance and recommend approval minus the "commercial kitchen", which would not be allowed by special use by ordinance and therefore should be precluded from their special use request.

**Commissioner Hicks Opened the Public Hearing:**

Ms. Ann Norlander, Calhoun County Clerk came forward to speak on behalf of the Calhoun County Treasurer. Stated in the year 2001 legislation was changed regarding the payment of taxes; that now after two-years the County Treasure is the foreclosure government unit that acquire properties due to nonpayment of taxes with approximately 600 for this upcoming year of which half are in the City of Battle Creek alone. Stated they hold an auction in August for the taxes and hold a minimum bid auction one-month later. Said they have a lot of properties to maintain such as mowing, snow removal, boarding-up etc. and that the Land Bank was approached to utilize this property and feel it is a good use for this land and would appreciate an urban garden.

Mr. Jeremy Andrews, 41 N. Wabash came forward to speak on behalf of Sprout Urban Farms, a non-profit organization that began in 2009; stating he has done twenty-one gardens in the city of Battle Creek and get the youth ages 16-22 years old to be involved to learn. Said this year they want to build a community garden for the youth that would not need his help once established. Stated it would provide food access for the neighborhood which would be of help; they would sell memberships etc. and their plans are to build it in three phases. Noted seeds have been started for the garden and that phase II was to build hoop houses with conduit for the cold crops to be grown inside and also build a farm stand to sell the items and tools; phase III is to have a barn raising project to allow for retail in the neighborhood. Mr. Andrews noted that they had spoken to over 50 persons in the neighborhood and had only one person that preferred to have a Community Center. Mr. Andrews introduced two persons who are here with him today that have been helping with this plan; Mr. Marcus Trammel, who is an organizer with Jonah from Battle Creek and Ms. Megan Minock who is a Planner from Ann Arbor.

Commissioner Buscher asked Mr. Andrews regarding permits and memberships; that it was noted they would be available to neighbors to purchase produce and was there a structure for those persons that maybe economically disadvantaged or unable to receive transportation. Mr. Andrews stated their CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) is an investment in a farm by a member of a community and theirs would be a pay-it-forward CSA that would be \$15.00 per week for a bag of produce that would be delivered to their door and would get a share of their harvest and invest in their success and failures and could also pay for additional costs for another family to get a bag. Noted they also have a work trade with volunteers, who work and would get a bag of produce free.

Ms. Krista Edwards, Calhoun County Land Bank, 315 W. Green St., Marshall, MI, stated that the Land Bank is in support of Sprout Urban Farms garden project; feel it is a good thing for the neighborhood also a good use of the land. Stated the County had demolished the structure and partnered with Sprout Urban Farms to lease the property for three-years and then would offer to renew the lease for three more years or purchase the property. Said it would be good for this area and also turn this abandoned site into a vibrant place in the neighborhood because of its size and would have a lot of impact. Stated the Land Bank is in agreement with the City's staff report.

Mr. Keith McDonald, 360 Capital Avenue, N.E. came forward to speak, stated he is the Pastor of the New Birth Bible Church and is here today in three capacities; Church Pastor, Vice-Chair of NPC #2 along with Samuel Gray, Chairperson and also as a resident where he chooses to live in Washington Heights. Stated their church is partnering with Sprout Urban Farms in regards to development at the site and are sending their youth to learn the trade and participate in the development of the community garden and they are in full support of this project.

Mr. Samuel Gray, 245 Irving Park Dr., Neighborhood Planning Council #2 Chairperson, came forward to speak in support on behalf of the NPC; stated at the NPC meeting the members were very excited about the project and had received answers to a lot of questions as to how they could partner with Sprout Urban Farms to make this happen. Mr. Gray noted he also serves on the board for God's Kitchen and the produce there serves the homeless and is very excited about how it would help the community and is in support of this Special Use Permit.

Mr. Devon Gibson, 132 James Street, came forward to speak and stated he comes from the Post Addition neighborhood and in May of 2010, he was a witness to a homicide and decided he was going to leave Battle Creek; he then met Mr. Andrews of Sprout Urban Farms and can honestly say it has changed his life and has met a lot of great people and learned about business and had attended courses at Kellogg Community College for business management and feel this would benefit and help the area youth and improve the city.

Mr. Antonio Gurrel, 231 Birdsall, came forward to speak and stated he was one of the interns employed by Sprout Urban Farms and looked at it as more than a job; it has changed the way he lives by learning to eat healthier, be more involved in the community and also set a good example for others. Said he has built relationships with his neighbors and feels it is a good organization that would get the community more involved and also be helpful.

***With no others wishing to speak, Commissioner Hicks closed the public hearing.***

**Discussion:**

Commissioner Frantz asked regarding the application for the 501C3; if it were common place for organizations such as Sprout Urban Farms to be 501C3 and in the event for whatever reason it might be denied would it make a difference to the County. Mr. Andrews stated in regards to if it were common; in the development of their organization from the beginning they have done a lot of visiting of other organizations similar such as Greening of Detroit, Growing Point of Milwaukee etc., who are all non-profit organizations. Said they are now already a non-profit organization with the State of Michigan and the second step is to apply for the 501C3, which they had done November 2011, and are currently awaiting that status. Noted they have a fiscal sponsor; Jonah who is a 501C3 organization which is how they receive their grant funding.

Ms. Krista Edwards, Calhoun County Land Bank stated it would not change the current lease term and think that if it did go away they did not expect it, and would revisit it when the lease was up; but it is their understanding that this type of organization is common place to be a 501C3.

Commissioner John Godfrey thanked the petitioner for their application and found it very interesting to read and could not find anything to not like and has heard Jeremy speak in the community many times. Said this is a tremendous opportunity for the community and would be very beneficial to the neighborhood. Noted that the site plan was done very well, except for the compost site he believes is shown on the rear portion of the property. Mr. Andrews stated the compost location was not shown on the map as they were not sure where to have it located; said there are three different types they could use and that it would be placed centrally located (hidden) and noted they do not smell if done correctly. Said their architect had drawn the grid area shown on the diagram as a possible shade location for sitting etc. and was not a compost area.

Commissioner Hicks asked Mr. Andrews how much produce they anticipate being grown. Mr. Andrews stated he was not sure as the youth are just learning and it would be new to them.

Commissioner Hicks said it would be a good opportunity to learn for the youth and asked if the land would be graded as it appears to be uneven. Mr. Andrews stated the Land Bank would grade the area where the building was demolished so it would have a natural slope and then cover it with top soil, seeded, add straw and left alone at this time as there are other areas to be developed.

Commissioner Hicks asked if the City or County recruited them or did they find each other. Mr. Andrews said that they had already worked together and done another community garden "Fremont Garden" with the County Land Bank and had been contacted by the County and asked if they were looking for another possible garden site.

Commissioner Buscher asked about the lease and purchase price; if the Land Bank was structured so they could help them so it would be an affordable price at the end of their lease. Ms. Krista Edwards stated that was a good question and that they try to sell them for a very fair value and not try to make a lot of money and if going to a good steward they sometimes sell properties for back taxes and anything they have had to put into the property; in this case they have the cost of demolition and would lease and then could change the date of purchase if needed.

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FRANTZ, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER SPRANGER TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT FOR 245 N. KENDALL STREET AS IT MEETS THE STANDARDS IN CHAPTER 1290.04; CRITERIA (A - H) TO INCLUDE STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT.**

**VOTE ON MOTION: ALL IN FAVOR; NONE OPPOSED; MOTION CARRIED.**

Students from Kellogg Community College State Local Government class along with Mr. John Williams were present today shadowing and being involved to see the complete process and

stated they also attended the Neighborhood Planning Council meeting. Said they plan on attending the City Commission meeting to learn the complete process. Stated they plan on working with the planner regarding future urban garden activities in Battle Creek and devise some language in planning to try and incorporate service learning in with this process and hope to continue that partnership with K.C.C. in the future with this activity to integrate it all together.

Commissioner John Godfrey asked Mr. Jeremy Andrews if he would continue to shepherd the group in the future as he was aware of his involvement in community government in Battle Creek to ensure they continue to flourish within our community. Mr. Andrews stated it only looks like he has been shepherding them; but in reality as a community builder he has helped them to determine their own vision, plan and choose their own site leader to do their project with guidance and help them to build a community garden and want to also help others to build new ones.

Mr. Shelby Cotton of Spring Arbor University of Battle Creek came forward to speak along with students; stated they were present today as a class project but turned out to be much more.

7. **Old Business:** None

8. **New Business:** None

9. **Comments by the Public:**

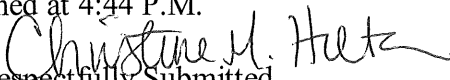
Mr. Shelby Cotton asked Mr. Andrews what type of support the Community Garden has for the 3-year lease and do they have a plan in place to move forward so it is long standing. Mr. Andrews stated they are funded by several foundations currently; Fair Food Network, Battle Creek Community Foundation and heavily supported by the Kellogg Foundation who also funds the Fair Food Network and provides support by sending them to other parts of the country to see how it is done so they are not reinventing the wheel. Noted they are always seeking more funding and sustainability options; which is why they are beginning to sell things now to provide jobs for kids, equipment, and to purchase the property from the Land Bank in a few years.

10. **Comments by the Staff and Commission Members:**

Commissioner Godfrey stated this is an example of grass roots effort in the community partnering with the County, City and neighbors; it is an exemplary example of how things are suppose to work within our city and he takes pride in what they have accomplished so far. Said he hopes to see progress during their development and that the B.C. Enquirer provide good press as it is developed and would like to give everyone a huge pat on the back for a great job.

Ms. Kathy Antaya, 117 Park Ridge, stated she too is in support of the Bright Star Farm idea and the CSA concept and suggest to Mr. Godfrey that in the Shopper there is a column that regularly highlights and covers the Sprout Urban Farms activities.

11. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 P.M.

  
Respectfully Submitted,  
Christine M. Hilton, AICP  
Executive Secretary, Planning Commission